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THE MUSEUM IN WAR TIME

WHAT effect has the war had upon the Museum? This natural question has been asked so many times during the last three years, and especially during the last few months, that perhaps a general answer to it will be of interest to readers of the BULLETIN. It will at least give an idea of the difficulties with which we have to contend in maintaining the institution at its usual state of efficiency, as we are endeavoring to do.

To begin with a difficulty in which we are sure to strike a sympathetic note, let us take the high cost of living, which we share with the rest of the community, and, it may be added, in proportion to our size. For although a museum does not eat, those in its service do, and it was to help them in this matter that the Trustees voted last winter a bonus to all its regular employees who were receiving salaries of \$1,200 or under, of five per cent of their pay for the year 1916, and ten per cent for the current year, this money to be paid out of Museum funds. At the same time the cost of supplies required for our regular work has been increasing, in some instances by leaps and bounds, putting a double pressure upon the need for economy. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the price of coal, which has risen so much since our annual budget was made up, in December, that we have before us at present the prospect of an increase above our estimates for the year of \$10,000 for this one item alone. Yet the building must be kept heated and lighted, and as the City has not increased our appropriation for maintenance to help meet these emergencies, the extra cost of all these items must be paid out of our own funds, thereby curtailing proportionately our ability to purchase objects for the enrichment of our collections.

Another obstacle we have had to contend with is the difficulty of getting the materials we want, at any price. To take one instance, everybody is familiar with the fact that with the falling off in importations produced by the war, there is an increasing dearth of textile fabrics in our

market, not yet made good by our own manufacturers. This has come at a particularly hard time for us, because in former years the effectiveness of many of our galleries was due in great part to the use of a fabric of moderate cost as a wall-covering, harmonious in color and pattern with the objects displayed against it. We had hoped to continue this system in certain rooms of the new wing, as well as in the rearrangement of other galleries, while the wall-coverings in some of the older galleries are so faded that they call for renewal. Yet the range of choice now offered to us is so limited, and the prices have become so high, that for only a few rooms have we been able to find satisfactory materials within our means, and in others the wall-coverings have been painted over to preserve something of the effect desired.

On the other hand, when the necessary supplies have been obtainable, the delays in their delivery have sometimes called for the extreme exercise of patience, and have held up important work for weeks at a time. This has been especially true of our exhibition cases, of which large numbers have been required by our additions and rearrangements. It is true that these cases are constructed in our own shops, but the metal for their framework has to be furnished in certain lengths and shapes, and as the furnisher has been for some time one of the principal makers of munitions in the country, the reasons for the delays are obvious. We do not complain, recognizing how insignificant our interests are as compared with the great need, but the fact is worth mentioning, because it has been a fundamental cause of our slowness in getting the new wing ready for exhibition, and in reopening the galleries formerly occupied by the Morgan Collection.

Turning now to another aspect of the war's effect upon the Museum, there is something to be said about the havoc it has already wrought in our personnel. Since its outbreak in 1914, and owing directly to it, our scientific and office staff has lost—or is about to lose—for the time at least, sixteen members, and the fate of six others was still doubtful when this article was prepared. Of our attendants

and workmen ten have been called through draft or enlistment, and fourteen are liable to be taken in the near future. Of the higher officials, Dr. Valentiner was the first to go, for although his definitive resignation as Curator of the Department of Decorative Arts was not presented until last December, he has been virtually lost to the Museum since the summer of 1914, when, being in Germany, he enlisted at once as a volunteer in the German army, in which he is now an officer. His loss was soon followed by that of Arthur C. Mace, who, being an Englishman, enlisted in the British service and is now an instructor in the army. Louis Marchat, who had only just arrived from France to take up his position as an attaché in our Department of Arms and Armor, was at once called back for service in the French army, and so the story goes. With the entry of America into the war, matters naturally became much more serious, and as can be judged from the figures given above, we now find ourselves crippled in almost every direction. The Department of Arms and Armor has been deprived of two skilful assistants, Messrs. Rowland and Grancsay; Mr. Winlock, Assistant Curator in the Department of Egyptian Art, is now a captain in the Coast Artillery, while besides Mr. Mace, our expedition in Egypt has lost for the time three valuable members, H. S. Evelyn-White, H. R. Hopgood, and Henry Burton, all of whom are in the British service. The Department of Decorative Arts has been, or is about to be, entirely stripped of its men. Mr. Friedley, to be sure, resigned his position as its Acting Curator in order to take up other work, but he is now expecting to be called upon for war duties. Mr. Milliken is now at Plattsburg, and Messrs. Plimpton and Aubé have also been called for military service. Fortunately we can look forward in the autumn to the return of Joseph Breck, as head of the department, to help stem this outward tide. Of the Museum Instructors, Alan Gordon has enlisted for the Signal Service, leaving another gap to be filled—but it is not necessary to go further into details, as these facts will show what serious inroads are being made upon our

staff. It is not merely a question of numbers. The workmen and attendants who leave we can hope to replace, but the men whose names have been mentioned were trained especially for the work upon which they have been engaged, some of them being experts of high standing in their profession, and their places will be difficult, if not impossible, to fill, independently of war conditions.

In one respect, and one in which there may be more general interest than in what has already been described, the effect of the war thus far has been entirely contrary to our expectations, namely, in the opportunities for purchasing. When it began, the general belief was that, with the scale on which it was being undertaken and the tremendous increase in the burden of taxation in which it would involve every country of Europe, works of art would soon be coming into the market in great numbers and at greatly reduced prices. Up to the present, however, neither has happened. The number of first-class works of art of whatever nature that have been offered for sale in Europe during the last three years is very much smaller than in the three years preceding, and this is especially the case with fine paintings, as any one can judge who has been familiar with our own market. Dealers, museums, and private collectors are having the same experience. There are plenty of people ready and eager to buy, but the things do not come out. The late John G. Johnson, known all over Europe as a quick buyer, said shortly before his death last spring that since the war began he had had hardly anything offered him which was worth consideration, and this is the common report. Various reasons are assigned for this surprising situation, which it would take too long to discuss, especially as none of them wholly explain it, but the fact remains.

As to prices, they have never been so high as they are at present. The late Mr. Morgan used to be thought to pay royally for things that he wanted, but the prices he gave were often moderate in comparison with those which are being asked and obtained nowadays. This is partly due to the scarcity alluded to, but

there is another cause, directly due to the war, which operates much more powerfully to our disadvantage. Not only in America, but in every country in Europe, neutral as well as belligerent, which has not been actually devastated, private fortunes already large have been vastly increased, and new crops of millionaires have sprung up, including many who are only too ready to invest their surplus in works of art. It is these people quite as much as the dealers who have made the present prices, and America is by no means the only country in which these prices prevail. A well-known Italian dealer who arrived here last spring reported that he had had an unusually successful season before his departure. On surprise being expressed at this, in view of the fact that there had been no Americans traveling in Italy during the winter, he replied: "Ah, but you must remember that in my country also there are people who have been making a great deal of money, and with them we have done a very good business." Public auction sales in various European centers have shown how keen this competition is, and they prove that it is by no means wholly a dealers' movement. An illustration, the more significant because it concerns a branch of art which is not popular among American private collectors, is the recent sale in London of the famous Hope Collection. In that were included 155 Greek vases which, according to the London Times, were expected to bring a total of about five thousand pounds, instead of which they went for nearly seventeen thousand!

Under conditions such as these it requires skilful manoeuvring and—it must be admitted—many futile efforts, to get what we want at prices which are justifiable or within our means. Nevertheless, we are not discouraged; and when the war is over, when the submarine peril is past, and we can safely bring across the Atlantic the things that have been accumulating for us on the other side, we hope to show that we have had our fair share of success in spite of the obstacles. We look forward, therefore, not despondently, to the day when our Recent Accessions Room shall

no longer have the lean appearance it has so often presented in these last years, and when the affairs of the Museum shall have resumed their normal course. In the meantime our motto will be "business as usual." It is the belief of Trustees and staff alike that we shall be doing a patriotic if not heroic duty by keeping the Museum active during the hard times that may be ahead of us, even though it serves no more than to offer to our people a distraction from the thoughts and burdens of war. In common with our sister-institutions we wish to demonstrate that even in a struggle like that which we are facing, America does not neglect the arts of peace. Therefore, our friends may be assured that, in spite of handicaps such as have been described, the Museum will continue its educational work, and increase the attractiveness of its exhibits, with unremitting effort.

E. R.

A LADY OF THE NILE¹

THE TOMB OF SENEPTISI AT LISHT. By Arthur C. Mace and Herbert E. Winlock. Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, edited by Albert M. Lythgoe. Paper, \$8; half leather, \$10.

AS the beginning of what is certainly to prove one of the leading series of published archaeological researches, the appearance of this sumptuous volume is an important event. For nearly a decade we have learned to look for the brief preliminary bulletins of the work of the Metropolitan Museum in Egypt under the able leadership of Albert M. Lythgoe, as very instructive reports from the field. The present volume crowns this nearly ten years' work as the inauguration of a series of exhaustively detailed accounts both in

¹This notice of a museum publication is reprinted, with permission, because it says some things which the Museum could not say, but which it has a justifiable pleasure in reading. It may, therefore, be excused for desiring to call the review—by Professor James H. Breasted of the University of Chicago—to the attention of the readers of the BULLETIN. The material from the tomb of Seneptisi, referred to in this review, is on exhibition in the Ninth Egyptian Room.—EDITOR.